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ONE CONTRIBUTION WHICH ART MAKES TO RELIGION

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"All things are yours" should be the motto of religion. There is no field of human interest which it does not touch; there is no realm of human endeavor from which it cannot be approached. In the April number of the BIBLICAL WORLD we published an article by Professor J. M. Coultter on the "Contribution of Biology to Religion." The present article by Professor Sargent is in a very different field, but serves to illustrate the same great principle that life is one and that its interests both serve and are sanctified by faith in God. Protestantism has never approved of the large use of art in religion which marks the services of the Roman Catholic church, but Professor Sargent shows that it is an ally of religion in that it gives men the assurance of a world of spiritual realities which science, with its strictly intellectual standards, sometimes fails to recognize.

Art has made a direct contribution to religion by developing forms of architecture and of decoration which constitute a suitable setting for religious ceremonies, and by embodying certain spiritual experiences in material form, as in pictures and music. While in these ways art tends to reinforce a religious experience already active, investigation leads one to doubt whether it often directly awakens religious experience or raises ethical standards. It appears to be unmoral, and to quicken and make less gross whatever emotional life is present regardless of whether that life is good or bad. It is a subtilizing but not necessarily an uplifting influence.

It is not the intention of this paper, however, to deal with this obvious contribution, but to present some considerations upon another, of a more indirect nature, which art makes to the problems which confront one who believes that science and religion are supplementary rather than competing factors in human

experience, and who endeavors to reconcile the two points of view without a compromise which robs either of its vitality.

The Difference between the Scientific and the Religious Point of View

The following discussion assumes that, beneath all minor considerations, the fundamental difference between the scientific and the religious points of view is this: that the scientific point of view regards as knowledge only those matters which have been conclusively demonstrated by an impartial analysis of all the available facts, while the religious attitude regards the dynamic element in the universe, which we call life, to be of such a nature that man can come into sympathetic relations with it, and can receive, by way of more or less direct response, forms of insight that cannot be gained by intellectual analysis. The scientific point of view may make full allowance for the limited range of its

data, and the possibility of errors in conclusions, which must be revised in the light of new facts, but it insists that in the building-up of this method of procedure by intellectual analysis lies the only possibility of man's escape from mental confusion and from slavery to his surroundings. The religious outlook may realize fully the tendency of its belief to harbor dark superstitions and empty or positively harmful vagaries, but it insists that a degree of authority must be allowed to the voice of inner assurance, this mystic response in the presence of reality. The young person in whose early life religion has been a prominent factor, but who comes later to recognize the necessity for a scientific attitude of mind, is obliged to face these apparently rival claims with perfect frankness if he is to hold a religious point of view and at the same time maintain an intellectual scrupulousness which will not allow him to overlook the full significance of facts.

The complexity of the increasing flow of his impressions and experiences has always threatened to overwhelm man in mental confusion unless he could find some rational interpretation of them and some plan for clarifying and dealing effectually with them. The religious and the scientific approach represent the two methods of procedure which have been tried. One is emotional and personal; the other intellectual and impersonal. The results have differed so essentially that their variations throw a good deal of light on the problem. The first of these methods, which was the most primitive type of explanation, was to consider all phenomena as the work of personality akin

to his own, whose good will was to be cultivated and whose wrath was to be appeased. One marked tendency of this interpretation in terms of superhuman personalities, was toward resignation of responsibility for conditions; a cultivation of contentment with the existing situation, on the ground that it was expressive of divine will, not to be questioned. This view, therefore, often proved to be a sort of intellectual opiate. On the other hand, it was an emotional stimulant which led to a range of activities extending from the sublimest self-sacrifice to the most revolting cruelty and oppression.

When science approached the problem of interpretation and classification, its method was radically different. It assumed responsibility and set about systematically to master circumstances. It examined conditions to discover their nature and the laws which govern them, in order that it might deal with them intelligently and effectively, unhindered by the fear of offending any higher intelligence. It was a powerful stimulus to the intellect but tended to put the emotions in the background.

As scientific methods developed they proved capable of contributing to many needs which religion was supposed to meet. For example, science furnishes a joy and peace in everyday life in place of that which religion essayed to give. A woman struggling with the burden of household affairs might turn aside to invoke relief, to pray or sing a hymn or read a poem, and return refreshed by this brief escape from dull routine into a realm of different and inspiring experiences. Modern domestic science, however, enables her to handle her daily

problem systematically and effectively and introduces elements of pleasure and interest into the work itself. Incidentally it allows her more time for the so-called spiritual pleasures if she still feels the need of them. In house and farm and factory scientific methods promise to lift burdens and bring freedom and pleasure. Railroads and telephones sometimes appear to promote brotherhood more rapidly than do church services, and commerce promises to do away with war.

These results are universally acknowledged to be good. They co-operate with religion and do not contradict its essential affirmation, namely, that at heart the universe is intelligent and beneficent. The modern scientific method is increasingly likely to appear, on first view, as the only procedure justified by facts, and as fairly adequate, potentially at least, to deal with all human conditions. The real problem presented for religion appears when it is discovered that, in the fields already analyzed, science shows that the workings of nature seem to be wholly mechanistic. Whatever opinion we may hold regarding the source of natural forces, we know that we can use them, and that they will serve us impartially for good or evil. This compels one to face the fact that things appear to occur by law unmodified by any overruling sympathy or interest, except where the human intellect takes the situation in hand. When one contemplates the wonderful development of life-forms, admirable from a human point of view, he is obliged to remember the equally wonderful development of noxious insects and of deadly disease germs. For example, one views with astonish-

ment the ingenious and elaborate perfection of the mosquito to act not only as a common pest but as a carrier of mortal disease.

The Religious Inefficiency of the Scientific Point of View

As one, however, listens to the explanatory suggestion that these things may be challenges to call forth man's best intellectual powers in overcoming them, he is tempted to feel that many of the challenges are liberally supplied with seemingly unnecessarily exasperating features. The argument that law must be impartial to be relied upon calls to mind incidents where apparently law need not be infringed in order to save suffering, and yet the suffering occurs. The loss of a great ship may be needed to teach men caution, but the lesson would seem to be sufficient if an overruling Providence should place the rescuing ship a few miles nearer. There seems often to be an irony of the elements when flood is followed by fire and fire by bitter cold. The fact that every beneficent event has been led up to by an indefinitely long series of preparatory causes gives slight satisfaction, because the same is true of every destructive event, or of any event whatsoever. Scientific experience soon hints that feelings of reverence and worship are survivals of primitive attitudes toward the yet unknown, and that these feelings will retreat before the advance of analytic methods. The only religious hope which the intellect appears to have left lies in the fact of the vast ranges of unexplored reality, which may reveal an explanation as to why the universe is managed in a manner so different from that by which we would order it, were we to do so

according to the best light of human judgment. When, however, one reluctant to give up a religious attitude argues with himself that science is still in its infancy and indefinitely far from a discovery of the source of things, and that the source will forever defy analysis and claim reverence, his intellect replies that, so far as science has gone, the retreat of any material sign of sympathy on the part of the universe has been sufficiently uniform, and the range of material tested has been sufficiently typical to justify a probability that similar results will continue to characterize the whole course of intellectual progress.

These materialistic suggestions are, of course, not conclusive. In view of the inconceivable vastness and complexity of the universe, one sometimes feels that we are justified in saying that as yet we know nothing. When trying to conceive why an omnipotent intelligence should allow progress toward what we consider as better conditions to be so slow, one may find some suggestions from history. Today we ourselves consider that it is ultimately better to allow laws to continue effective even though they fall into bad hands, than for any body of citizens, however capable of doing so, to transcend for the sake of some immediate good the laws they themselves have made, or to invite a benevolent despot to take matters into his own hands. One may then be willing to substitute, with all it implies, the term republic of God for the kingdom of God.

Nevertheless, unless we can find some confirmation of a type radically different from that gained by conclusions from an impartial examination of appearances,

the following situation is evident. On the one hand, religion will appear to be looking for its intellectual justification to what may be found in the fields yet unexplored by science, while science, on the other hand, is presenting a steadily increasing accumulation of facts which suggest an impersonal mechanistic interpretation of events. The universe appears deaf to direct appeals and responsive only to management by intellectual processes. To remain a believer in any other than scientific methods of approach to truth and still maintain a genuine intimacy with facts is not a simple problem.

Throughout its history, however, religion has put forward claims that a way essentially different from that of scientific processes is open to direct knowledge of certain relations of the universe to the individual—a way which consists in an immediate sympathetic response between the individual and his surroundings. Religion insists that this inner assurance is a positive experience awakened by a spiritual life wider than that of the individual who responds to it. Instead of feeling any necessity of awaiting the possibility of future confirmation by scientific discoveries in the range of the yet unknown, it frankly claims that there are highly significant ranges of experience which are closed to approach by methods of analysis and must be revealed, if at all, by the sympathetic response they awaken. It is the claim of the prophets who say that God speaks to them.

This claim marks the essential difficulty in reconciling the religious with the scientific point of view. At this point they appear to many earnest students to

part company, to challenge each the other's method, and to demand renunciation of the one as the price of any genuine hold upon the other. The antithesis between the two points of view may be summarized as follows.

The scientific point of view tends to the conclusion that all that can seriously be regarded as knowledge is the result of rigid and unimpeachable lines of demonstration. The only trustworthy approach to the problems of existence is that of patient and exact intellectual analysis. Objective proof should precede acceptance of any belief. The religious point of view claims that there are realms of reality where intuition is authoritative and will stand the test of later intellectual analysis. These realms, moreover, cannot be entered by analytical methods. Acceptance because of inner assurance must precede objective proof. The boundaries of what has been analyzed do not always extend to, or coincide with, the boundaries of what is known.

How Art Authenticates Religious Experience

An instance, capable of concrete proof, where ranges of experience apparently closed to scientific approach had been opened up by immediate emotional response would help to authenticate the kind of experience which religion claims, and thus would have a significant bearing upon the question in hand.

Now the fine arts do furnish such an instance. For example, good proportions, fine curves, and harmonious color relations are determined by being felt out. Scientific methods can analyze the results and discover some of the prin-

ciples involved but these methods could not have taken the initiative in projecting those results. The ranges of experience which have found expression and embodiment in the fine arts would probably have remained undeveloped, had scientific methods been the only valuable methods at human command for dealing effectively with experience.

The assurance with which the scientist announces that typhoid fever is caused by a certain bacillus appears to have been reached by an avenue wholly different from that which brought to the artist Whistler the assurance on the basis of which he pronounced certain combinations of colors and forms to be true art. Both, however, announced facts that were later demonstrated to be of practical value. One pointed the way of progress from primitive to effective ways of battling with disease; the other showed how more effectually to quicken those aesthetic emotions which tend, with each new refinement, to reinforce higher levels of consciousness.

The Basis of Assurance of Art

It is a matter of considerable interest to compare the confident statements of great artists and musicians with those of great spiritual prophets. Whistler, realizing that what he felt to be aesthetically right was not generally accepted, and knowing the hopelessness of trying to prove scientifically what he felt artistically, is credited with saying: "I am not arguing the matter, I am simply telling you." He was at work exploring a field where the assurance based upon the direct reaction of a finely attuned organism has been proved to be the safest guide and the ultimate authority. Job,

in the face of an aggregation of adverse facts and opinions, said: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Whitman asserts, "I know I shall not pass like a child's carlecue cut with a burnt stick at night," and again,

Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible
to proof, is its own proof. . . .

Something there is in the float of the sight
of things that provokes it out of
the Soul.

The history of music, painting, and architecture demonstrates that the arts furnish concrete objective proof that there are ranges of experience which cannot be entered by processes of intellectual analysis, although they may later be reinforced by them, but where immediate emotional response must be the guide, and where the final outcome of its leadings will stand the test of analysis.

When facts of this sort are examined, one feels intellectually justified in concluding that the tendency of the scientific point of view, to regard the significant division of reality as being, on the one hand, the already analyzed and classified, and on the other, that which still awaits analysis, must be supplemented by another, namely, that of the analyzable and the unanalyzable—that which can be approached and understood by processes of analysis, and that which can be approached only by being directly experienced.

In other words, one finds two valid methods of dealing with his experiences, methods which are not competitive but supplementary and each of unique importance in its own field. One eliminates emotions so far as possible and proceeds by processes of relatively

impersonal analysis and conclusion. The other depends on direct response and sympathetic insight. Each method has its proper functions, its limitations, its possibilities, and its peculiar pitfalls. One is likely to content itself with post-mortem examinations and mechanistic interpretations; the other is in danger of being led away into vagaries and vaporings. Neither appears entirely disengaged from the other. They are distinguished, not absolutely, but in proportion as one in any particular situation regards himself as a dynamic instrument to be intelligently and effectively directed, or as a vibratory instrument to be finely attuned. The intellect grasps, and can grasp, only part of experience. The whole contains other elements which must be laid hold of, if at all, in other ways. These other elements might be disregarded, as indeed an extreme materialistic point of view sometimes does attempt to disregard them, were it not for the fact of their actual pressure in experience and their very definite influence upon behavior.

We all recognize that in the past men have attempted to deal emotionally with many things that should have been handled intellectually. For example, religion has attempted with disastrous results to settle by invoking direct personal intervention of supernatural powers problems that lent themselves to scientific solution. An opposite mistake is possible, to seek to approach by processes of detailed dissection those matters which, to be known, must be experienced.

While art may not contribute directly to higher ethical standards, it does furnish an interesting objective proof

that there are ranges of significant experience which cannot be entered by processes of intellectual analysis, but where direct emotional response is authoritative and will stand the test of later criticism. The fine arts also tend

to quicken a highly complex type of emotional life and thus to refine those powers of sympathetic response which alone are capable of knowing God, but will know him only crudely unless they are attuned.

EZEKIEL'S HOLY STATE AND PLATO'S 'REPUBLIC'

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There are some people who are foolish enough to believe that all ideals of the past are outgrown and worthless. Particularly are we tempted to think that Ezekiel, if not Plato himself, belongs to an age that has become merely archaeological. But nothing could be farther from the truth. The great problems of the past are still the problems of today, and the teachings of men like Ezekiel and Plato, when once they are understood, still have inspiration. Professor Baldwin's comparison of the social ideals of these two great men of the past is something more than an antiquarian discussion. It is a study of the originators of much that is idealistic in our modern world.

That Plato's *Republic* was one of the most epoch-making books of the world there can, of course, be no question. Few books have been more influential. Almost every, if not every vision of "a world unrealized" written since, has owed more or less to that philosopher with the soul of a poet, who, as from some "tower of speculation," looked into the future, and saw "the vision of the world, and all the wonder that would

be." He it was who suggested such treatises as St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, and More's *Utopia*; and through the latter, Campanella's *Civitas Solis*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Harrington's *Oceana*, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Sir John Eliot's *Monarchy of Man*, Hall's *Mundus alter et idem*, Filmer's *Patriarcha*, Butler's *Erewhon*, and Bellamy's *Looking Backward*.¹ Moreover the list is being continually supplemented by additions from

¹ Besides the speculative treatises mentioned above, we find another large group obviously inspired by the same original, but less speculative, and more playful in tone. To the latter class belong Barclay's *Argenis*, Bishop Goodwin's *Man in the Moon*, Bishop Wilkin's *Discovery of a World in the Moon*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Paltock's *Peter Wilkins*, and Lytton's *Coming Race*. A fairly complete bibliography may be found in the *Nova Solyma*, edited by Rev. Walter Begley, London, 1902, II, 36 ff. Probably the most complete discussion of the whole subject is to be found in the *Geschichte des antiken Kommunismus und Sozialismus* by Dr. Robert Pöhlman, professor of ancient history in the University of Erlangen, two volumes, Munich, 1901. Many of the more playful Utopias are included in the *Voyages imaginaires, songes, visions, et romans cabalistiques*, 37 volumes. Paris, 1787.